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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels

Statement submitted by World Veterans Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-22089 (E) 070206

Statement

The World Veterans Federation (WVF) is pleased to comment on a theme of this 50th Session of the UN CSW: "***Equal participation of women and men in decision-making at all levels.***" The WVF, founded in 1950, brings together those who have experienced the sufferings of war - as combatants and civilian victims of war- who have dedicated themselves not only to improve their well-being , but to support the principles of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For more than twenty years, WVF has been a strong voice for human rights, testifying to this Commission and other UN bodies, and working with governments and non-governmental organizations on behalf of women's equal rights, with emphasis on those impacted by armed conflicts.

It is timely and urgent that the UN CSW assess the status of the effort to bring more women into decision-making positions, what factors block that access , and why they occur. Different avenues have been taken over the years to overcome them – some have worked slowly, some have not worked at all. The challenge to the UN, to the international community and to governments is to review the current situation and to explore other strategies to achieve this goal.

Report Card -- Studies(see Background Papers) have shown that when quotas are mandated or voluntary for a certain percentage of seats in parliaments or legislatures to be set aside for women, there has been a very slow but steady increase in women's participation in parliaments and local governance over the years. . Thirty percent has been considered the *critical mass* when women's participation in governance becomes truly effective. Today, one quarter of the top countries with over 30% women are *post-conflict countries*. They include Rwanda, South Africa, and Mozambique, where an amazing number of women were elected to their parliaments in the first post-conflict elections. They are called *fast track countries* because in a short period of time women have become significant actors in the governance of their countries. Further study is needed to examine why and how this phenomenon came about, and whether that process can be adapted elsewhere.

On the other hand, there can be less positive developments for women wherein change in governments, from wars or massive political upheaval, occur. The experience of Moldavia(background paper) paints a bleak picture of 'unstable transition periods…where the ugliest social patterns come to the fore'. A report from that country indicates that downward economic circumstances contribute to the lack of gender equality. These situations, where the clock is turned back on women's rights, were not uncommon after vast political, economic and social upheavals, whether they took place in the breakup of the Soviet Eastern bloc, or the reshuffling of former colonial empires.

More attention needs to be paid as to how women's rights can be protected and enhanced with those societies in transition. In such cases, not only had democratic institutions been absent, but civil society may not have flourished – these must be addressed early on.

An interesting case involving a quota of decision making positions in the private sector was reported recently in the press. The government of Norway mandated that in the next two years, 40% of the Board members of the nation's large publicly traded private companies had to be women. This is highly significant if one considers that in today's global economy, the corporation (especially the multilateral) is often as powerful a political actor as the government. It was reported that this law met with an uproar from the male business community. A surprising development in view of the fact that Norway has one of the highest percentages of women parliamentarians in the world.

A major challenge is to convince men that they will benefit from the addition of women in decision making, in the public and the private sectors. Sharing power is never easy, and rarely accepted voluntarily. It is seen as a loss , rather than a gain, when positions are mandated for women, especially when it has been considered one gender's birthright. Yet other points of view, other interests and experiences , which women add, enrich the mix and can be sources of new ideas and fresh thinking. Another plus is that by bringing in 'others', there will also be a sharing responsibilities and onerous burdens. Men as well as women will benefit from broadening participation in decision-making.

Resolution 1325 A powerful tool for effecting change in decision making came from passage by the UN Security Council of Resolution 1325 in October 2000 which reaffirmed the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and

in postwar reconstruction. By mandating the inclusion of women in peace processes, including the writing of peace treaties, and post-war reconstruction efforts, there exists the chance to create new laws and institutions quickly which promote women's equality. Wars themselves are transformational. But history tells us that reconstruction of society can go in different directions – witness the *fast track countries* which increased participation of women in governance, but also the case of societies in transition which diluted women's rights. Conflicts shake up social and cultural institutions including tribal and religious customs, so that there are opportunities to reshape the landscape. Women's presence at the peace table and in the drafting of treaties can assure that their interests are being considered .

The recent experiences of the writing of constitutions in Iraq and Afghanistan dramatize the need for women's active participation in this process; otherwise, their roles in the post-conflict society can be severely circumscribed. Implementation of Resolution 1325 can lead to new political, economic and legal configurations which empower women and ensure their human rights.. We share the conviction that "**peace agreements (are) a means for promoting gender equality and insuring participation of women.**" We urge the UN and governments to give Resolution 1325 full backing when peace processes and post war reconstruction strategies are on the table. Civil society also must use its influence to make Resolution 1325 a potent force for change. Women need to be at the drawing board as societies rebuild and reorder their institutions.

Enabling Environment CEDAW and other UN conventions and protocols that promote the human rights and equality of women, the major UN Conferences, strong actions of the UN agencies such as the Commission on the Status of Women, UNIFEM, and national initiatives, all contribute to fashioning a "enabling environment" where women's equality can be pursued effectively and institutionalized. Other avenues to prepare women for decision-making and involvement in the political process should be explored . Needed are more mentoring and training programs (from men as well as women) so that women will be ready to step into such roles. More women should participate in community, national, and international organizations. Education for women and girls must be broadened and enriched to further understanding of laws and rules that they must deal with in their daily lives.

Partnership Men's support and positive actions must be part of the campaign for the sharing of political power with women. Many men are already involved; more must be sought to broaden the base of support. What would be helpful would be to create a "**culture of partnership**", dedicated to mobilize men and women in support of achieving women's equal rights in all areas. There are natural opportunities for such a partnership when men and women are together in an issue, fraternal, social, or professional organization. Especially useful are men's and women's joint participation within organizations One commentator suggested such interchanges are needed if men are truly "**to become equal partners of women on this road to a transformed society. We could attain gender equality *de jure but not de facto* unless these values get woven into the fabric of society.**"

Case Study The experience of the World Veterans Federation as an international organization of men and women is particularly relevant. It took over thirty years for the WVF to focus on women's issues, even though it had women members from its beginnings in 1950. A Standing Committee on Women was created in 1984 to stimulate a partnership between men and women to support the goals of the WVF. Even without a "critical mass", women have played more and more important roles in every area of WVF activity, including leadership at the highest levels. By emphasizing the partnership of men and women within the organization on behalf of its goals, it has also fostered partnerships in their countries and with other members of the international community.

Though the WVF interest in women's issues was stimulated by concerns of its women members , it evolved to become a major supporter of the universality of human rights and mainstreamed gender issues throughout its deliberations. At its 23rd General Assembly, a WVF resolution " **Welcome(d)s the Beijing plus Five Outcome Document's *reaffirmation of the need for a partnership between men and women to reach a common goal of gender equality…*** " Also, as an example of its broad commitment to equal rights, in another resolution, the WVF hailed the establishment of the International Criminal Court, which it had urged for many years, and also "**urges(d) member associations to be strong advocates for gender justice so that gender-based crimes against women are prosecuted with the same dedication as other crimes, and that no exemptions are allowed for religious or cultural reasons.**"

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Statement

On the historic occasion of the 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) takes this opportunity to again express its full and unequivocal support for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and the outcomes of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly (Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century). WILPF has, since its inception in 1915, worked to prevent armed conflicts and to establish the conditions for sustainable peace on a global scale. As an NGO with ECOSOC consultative status, WILPF has participated in all of the United Nations sponsored World Conferences on Women and Sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. WILPF marks its commitment and continued affirmation of the struggle for full recognition and fulfillment of women's human rights and security in all spheres and continues to work to ensure the participation of women in achieving these goals.

WILPF recognizes and applauds the efforts prior to and beyond the BPFA to ensure and enhance women's equal participation in decision making processes. This extends from the recognition in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the right of equal political participation, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the basis provided in Articles 4, 7 and 8 thereof for initiatives to enhance women's equal participation in all areas of public life, to the urging in Security Council Resolution 1325 for Member States to ensure increased representation of women in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, the 2003 General Assembly Resolution 58/142 on Women and Political Participation and the reiteration in the BPFA and the reviews thereof that "women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace."

WILPF notes, with some regret, that even in this historic 50th Session of the Commission, the successful achievement of the Commission's object of equal rights between men and women remains elusive. We hope that in designing its future program and methods of work the Commission will ensure the rapid and effective fulfillment of its mandate and that all Member States provide the necessary commitment and resources to make the achievement of gender equality a reality. WILPF encourages the adoption of specific, time-bound measurable targets to achieve the goal of equal participation.

To ensure the achievement of the goal of gender equality and to set a positive example, it is vital that it be pursued within the United Nations system itself. WILPF reiterates the call made by NGOs at the 49th Session of the Commission to more effectively pursue gender mainstreaming and to upgrade and better resource the gender architecture and related mechanisms within the United Nations. At the very least, the United Nations should set an example of gender balance and also urge and assist Member States to realize the as yet unattained BPFA goal of at least 30% women in decision making positions.

The themes under review by the Commission in this 50th Session are ones which are, in WILPF's view, interrelated, mutually reinforcing and vital to achieving gender equality. The Outcome of the 2005 World Summit illustrates the laudable recognition by States of this crucial link between participation, equality and development and that the full and effective implementation of the BPFA and outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly "is an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration."

WILPF calls on Member States to implement the Millennium Development Goals and broader development goals in a gender-centered manner, without which, eleven years beyond the BPFA, women's full and effective participation remains severely restricted.

We find it unacceptable that access to opportunities to work under humane and fair conditions and access to clean water and sanitation, health services and education remain beyond the reach of most women. We do not agree with the commodification and privatization of these essential services, especially in light of the resultant disproportionate negative impact on women of such policies. Unequal access to resources and the resultant unequal economic power and persistent and pervasive under-development is a form of violence in and of itself and, further, makes women particularly vulnerable

to violence both during conflict and so-called times of peace. Without inclusive and sustainable development based on a system of gender equality, true and sustainable peace is impossible. WILPF calls upon all states to therefore include a holistic gender perspective when allocating resources and developing programs to implement the MDGs and any other development practices or projects and insists that the CSW urge them to do so.

WILPF calls on Member States urgently to act to ensure that women and men have fair and equal access to natural, economic and political resources so as to ensure equal participation in decision making in the various areas of public and private life including participation in development. We call on governments to ensure that marginalized women, including widows, indigenous, disabled and minority women, are included in programs and processes designed to improve and enhance the access of women to these resources.

Furthermore, WILPF urges Member States to recognize the importance of women's participation in the policy decisions of government to achieve the goals of equitable distribution of resources and to facilitate this participation, including through gender mainstreaming and the adoption of temporary special measures to ensure women's participation in political and public life provided for in CEDAW and encouraged by that Committee's general recommendation 23 of 1997.

The challenges which remain in implementing the internationally agreed commitments on gender equality and empowerment highlight the importance of creating and ensuring an enabling environment for this and we call on national governments to take positive measures to institute policies, strategies and mechanisms to increase women's capabilities, assets and agency in the essential areas of education, health and work.

WILPF recognizes that the participation of women in decision making at all levels includes participation in economic and trade decisions and that the disproportionate negative effects of globalization on women makes their input in the decision making of supra-national institutions, such as the World Trade Organization and the other Bretton Woods Institutions, vital. WILPF calls on Member States to provide mechanisms by which women are guaranteed an opportunity to input into the decision-making processes of these institutions at a local level and that these processes take into account the particular needs of women.

We support and commend the recent establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and recognize the important role it can play in ensuring lasting and sustainable peace. We urge the Peacebuilding Commission to take seriously the call in the resolution establishing the Commission (A/60/L.40) to integrate a gender perspective in all its work (Article 20) and to involve women's organizations in its activities (Article 21) both in the immediate post-conflict stage of the Commission's operation and as it moves into the development stage in post-conflict reconstruction, keeping in mind always the call in UNSCR 1325 "to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict."

WILPF emphasises the need for the United Nations system and Member States to recognize that violence against women, including sexual and gender-based violence and continuing impunity for such violence creates serious obstacles and challenges to the full and active participation of women in these and all other decision making processes. We urge all relevant actors, including those within the United Nations system, Member States and parties to armed conflict, to take special measures to protect women from all such forms of violence and for parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law as set out in Article 9 of UNSCR 1325 and to this end, support international and national courts (including the International Criminal Court) truth and reconciliation commissions and all other transitional justice mechanisms that pursue the goal of ending impunity.

As a 90 year old organization, WILPF reaffirms its commitment to work for collective human security and sustainable peace in collaboration with civil society, governmental and international actors, including within the United Nations system. We look forward to working with others around the world to dismantle the prevailing culture of militarism and create a culture of peace in which racism and discrimination, economic injustice, violence and every form of oppression are absent and in which women are full and equal participants.

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Statement submitted by VIVAT International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Statement

VIVAT International (VIVAT) follows with great interest the progress made on women's issues, and firmly believes that gender equality is the key to development. We note the increasing role of women in all aspects of life through the years and congratulate the international community/member states/NGOs in taking bold steps in promoting gender equality. From our experience in working with women in 62 countries cutting across all the continents we see that the progress made is far from satisfactory. Indeed, not only does poverty wear the face of a woman but also the victim of injustice is invariably a woman.

As Secretary General Kofi Annan said in his opening address at the Beijing +5, "...women continue to bear a disproportionate burden of poverty, illiteracy, ill health, malnutrition and violence". We believe it is still true today. If we are to collectively address the issues of poverty and injustice, we should start with women and their empowerment.

As the Beijing declaration puts it: "We are convinced that women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace"– Beijing Platform for Action (BPA no. 13). It means not only equal opportunities in the workplace and at home, but also in society as a whole. It demands true democratization of the political, social and cultural spheres. The unique inputs of women are vital for full attainment of the goals of equality, development and peace. Beijing +5 adds the important role of men: "men must involve themselves and take joint responsibility with women for promotion of gender equality" (BPA no. 6).

VIVAT emphasizes that acknowledgement of women's crucial contribution to society is an important ingredient for gender equality. Most of their economic and domestic contribution goes unnoticed. For example, their work "at home" whether monetized or not is largely ignored. In the work place, their exclusion from higher education results in their lack of managerial qualifications. Indigenous women often face barriers both as women and as members of indigenous communities. The sad reality is, the persistent and increasing burden of unemployment are placed on women. The BPA states: "One fourth of all households worldwide are headed by women and many other households are dependent on female income even where men are present" (BPA no. 22). They are key contributors to the community and in the workplace.

We agree with this Commission that education is crucial for examining gender equality. BPA states that as many as 113 million children do not attend school and two-thirds of illiterate people are women (BPA no. 263). Beijing +5 found that little progress has been made in combating illiteracy in developing countries (no. 10). Our on-the-ground experience confirms these. Universal primary and secondary education is the first key to gender equality.

Poverty hits women the most. It prevents them from being dynamic and assertive of their rights. The worsening economic crisis in many countries lessens the capabilities of women to be involved in productive economic activities. We renew our call for poverty eradication as crucial to equitable and gender sensitive development. In order to achieve this, we urge member states to give primary importance to the concerns of women and children in combating poverty. We need national strategies both for developed countries to meet their ODA targets and for developing countries to look for innovative financing for development and to directly fund programs for the eradication of poverty. Debt relief to the least developed countries (LDCs) must be granted to give these countries the breathing space they need. But the key to sustainable economic growth is fair and just trade. In all this, women should play a central role in development and decision-making. Gender equality is key to development.

We call on governments to enact policies for full human development, not only market development. Social services are not an "expense" but a necessity and the right of all human beings. We support initiatives promoting alternatives to big business like small-scale enterprises for women through Microcredit. Our grassroots experiences have shown that women are good at taking "economic risks". Some of our successful Microcredit programs are with women.

VIVAT notes with alarm the growing threat against migrant women. More and more migrant women are not only separated from their families but also traumatized by inhumane labor conditions and are exposed to violence and abuses from their employers. We join NGOs and Civil Society in calling on all governments to address this growing problem.

VIVAT welcomes

- Initiative generated by this commission on choosing women and development and women and decision-making to assess progress made and lessons learned.
- Initiatives derived from holding the UN International Year of Microcredit 2005 stressing the pressing need to build inclusive financial sectors for development.
- Soon to be published Secretary General's study on Violence against Women.
- 2006 High Level Session on International Migration and Development.

VIVAT calls on

- The immediate implementation of Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3, and not to wait for 2015 and thus fulfill the promises made at the World Summit in 2000.
- All member states to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- To address the widespread armed conflicts and solutions based on militarization.
- Continuous efforts to fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
- International bodies like UN Commission on Population and Development, which provide disaggregated data on migration and other women issues, to see the real score.
- VIVAT urges all governments to institute mechanisms for dialogue and listen to women at the local, regional and national levels.

Conclusion

The key to genuine development, which includes poverty eradication, lies in having women play an equal role in policy making and its implementation. Recognizing their role in the development process, and preparing the women through proper education, adequate health facilities, and employment will go a long way in executing the plan of women's participation in development. A strong political will on the part of all stakeholders, including the political leaders, will enable both UN and the national governments to make this happen.

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Statement submitted by Legião da Boa Vontade, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Statement

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex. The Legion of Good Will (LGW), a Brazilian NGO in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) collects and shares best practices and lessons learned within the United Nations (UN) system on strategies of empowerment and advancement of women and girls to disseminate in national and international levels through several means of communications and applied at the LGW's Community and Educational Centers, Day Care Centers and primary schools in Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Argentina, Portugal and in the USA. As the journalist, radio broadcaster and writer José de Paiva Netto, President of the Legion of Good Will states: "All successful organizations have the remarkable presence of spiritually enlightened women. Intuition, the Creator's competence manifested in the creature, is one of the most powerful female instruments. Maybe that is why Voltaire (1694-1778) once had said: 'Tous les raisonnements des hommes ne valent pas un sentiment d'une femme', that is, all men's reasoning are not worth the sentiment of a woman".

For centuries women have been facing the consequences of a patriarchal society, constantly having more duties than rights — in the particular case of black women, only an exotic value has been attributed to them, either as sexual objects or as slaves or easy-to-manipulate servants. International organisms have revealed the factors of poverty and low school efficiency, i.e., personal and private risk as the front door of million of women and children in the sex market. And there are many ongoing forms of female exploitation. To raise a society conscious of its capacity of articulating its rights and duties with moral, ethnic and spiritual responsibility is a duty of each one of us, civil society, as the journalist Paiva Netto emphasizes: "On the fall of any country or civilization, the first great step to the collapse is the work for the demoralization of women. Women are the basis of nations, the support of the peoples. Through maternity, they get closer to God in such a level that we, men, will never be able to reach. (...) The woman is the soul of Humanity, the good root and the foundation of civilizations".

Since the beginning of life in society, women were considered, by the dominant classes, to be inferior to men. In many countries, they achieved the right to express their political opinion by the power of vote only on the second half of the 20th century. When Human Beings begin to understand one another with respect and dignity — that give them the worth of citizen —, they will understand the performance suitable to them in society. "Feelings of mercy, love, solidarity are", as the director of the LGW declares, "levers that will raise from the ruins (moral, social, political ruins, etc.) the Solidary Altruistic Ecumenical Society, that is not an utopia, nor an ideology. It is a proposal that lives the exercise of transnational fraternity, without racial, gender, religion borders or any other kind. In the Solidary Altruistic Ecumenical Society the individual understands that the body is much more than matter. It is the vehicle for the transforming actions abolishing the individualistic feelings that cooperate for the degeneration of collective groups".

The Legion of Good Will brings to the 50th Commission on the Status of Women its cooperation for the absolute fulfillment of Beijing Platform of Action, working to facilitate partnership between men and women in all sections, wherever it is politically, culturally, scientifically or socially. Following Paiva Netto's dialect, the Legion of Good Will reinforces the important role of women in the social arena. (...) "Women have the right to become President of a country, a religious leader, a CEO, a captain of an aircraft and transatlantic ships; she has the right to become a doctor, an engineer, a teacher... At work, there is a fair concept of value among men and women: that of competence. So the genders here are harmonized. May the man shine, may the woman shine, according to each one's competence. This does not mean that men and women are completely equal. The anatomy itself denies this fact. What I would like to say is that we should not support old barriers and raise new ones, firmed on taboos, prejudice and spurious interests to hinder greater influence of the woman on the destiny of the world. Men and Women depend on one another. They complete themselves". (Paiva Netto, extracted from the book *Reflections and Thoughts — Dialect of Good Will*, published in 1987).

In the beginning of this millennium we see a growing movement of the fight against discrimination of women by the international community. The fulfillment of the UN Charter added to the efforts of the people and organizations spread throughout the world, world governments have implemented policies of promotion of respect and human rights and to the fundamental freedoms, without discrimination of race, gender, language, religion or color.

By this solidary and ecumenical way, LGW fosters several socio-educational programs and projects that promote the valorization of women and children in personal and social risk situations. More than four million assistances a year are made through its Community and Educational Centers. Women are motivated to develop themselves as a whole, taking the development to the context of their families by means of actions in the areas of maternal health, nutrition, education and training courses, besides offering psychological, juridical and social support. According to the data collected by a research held in 2005 by *Toledo & Associados*, women represent 86% of the assistance made annually by the LGW. Being the woman the core of the family, the investment directed towards her becomes the most efficient way of transforming society.

From the main programs *Woman BEING* stands out, going back to the rescue of human, professional intellectual and emotional self-esteem of women, pregnant or not. The betterment of the quality of life is looked for in many different ways. Educational lectures, workshops and occupational training courses that aim at increasing the family income and the re-insertion into labor market. Juridical and psychological support, made by voluntary professionals, guarantee the guidance to problems generated by many different levels of vulnerability. Groups of experience work for the awareness of the importance of family planning; prenatal care; of affection between mother and child; of knowledge and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, cervical and breast cancer; among other topics. In the project "Baby-citizen", the pregnant women receive care during all stages of pregnancy. Complementary nutrition, speaking and music therapy, basic hygiene care, besides orientation on breastfeeding and baby health, are some of the actions developed until the children surpass the most risky period of mortality, i.e., reaches the first year of age.

Other initiatives to guarantee that the rights of women are being respected are day care centers and schools of the Legion of Good Will, that prepare children to reach their full potential of development and exercise the citizenship. From nursery to high school, the LGW applies a qualified differentiated methodology, which promotes the spiritual-bio-psychosocial progress of the students. Besides the most advanced techniques of education, the Ecumenical Citizen Pedagogy, proclaimed by Paiva Netto, takes to the student's universal values of Ecumenical and Solidary Spirituality. The teaching facilities of the LGW are operated under the motto "Here we study. Brain and Heart are formed", that combines intellect and feeling. This way, the Institution has gathered forces for the fulfillment of the convention that determines the elimination of all forms of discrimination towards women, enhancing the participation of the female sex in achieving gender equality among genders in all areas.

There is no way of living the equality and justice without understanding that the conducting element for the progress of the peoples is Love. The Human Being, before being a social actor, is a transforming agent; he is part of the social cell. If one of the cells gets sick, the whole cell tissue is compromised. To look for the equilibrium, as the President of the LGW states, is the bias for the comprehension of equality:

"The growing process of maturation of a People which are discovering even tardiness their rights as a citizen, considering that two hundred years have passed since the French Revolution (we are in 1991), will come to an end that no country can truly develop its talents, if it goes on existing as a big slave quarter with masters and slaves, either shutting itself as a xenophobic shell, or opening up in a temerarious way, up to the point of losing its identity, its sovereignty. People's comprehension will get mature when they are able to understand the value of citizenship in its *sensu lato*, because it is not enough to consider a citizen only in his/her physical context, but also in his/her **spiritual** context, after all, body and **Soul** form any component of human groups**.** Indeed we are originally Spirit. This is the full meaning of citizenship, which cannot admit the sole illiteracy of human letters, but the ignorance of spiritual maters as well. The lack of knowledge about the reality of the facts discussed in here increases actions which will cause hunger, unemployment, sectarianism, cold individualistic, i.e. self-worshipping idealism, the fostering of scorn towards those who are suffering in society, because wealth and poverty lie within Human Beings; to reveal them or not depends on mentality and cultural factors (which will be markedly spiritual in a near future) that have to be practiced. "(...) It is urgently necessary to change mentality, the one which enthrones crime as a model, exploitation as a goal, mistakes being apathetically faced as a 'good'

settlement of the existence, so we can achieve a fair social system, product of the decisive action of effectiveness, fraternally combative communities, and of a government that settles up firm goals for the progress of it's country and it's population. However, with no pretext whatsoever should we at any time renounce the generous help of our friends from the Supreme Spiritual World, whom many people properly call Guardian Angels. Actually what is concrete is the Spirit, which does not mean that the body, its outfit, should be criminally discharged. Older people say that 'an empty bag does not stand upright'. So let's set equilibrium as our objective." (Paiva Netto, *Somos todos Profetas* [We are all Prophets], 44th edition, São Paulo: Elevação, page 125).

As a conclusion, we bring to the participants of the 50th Commission on the Status of Women the following quote of the President of the Legion of Good Will, José de Paiva Netto, published in the magazine *BOA VONTADE Mulher* [GOOD WILL *Woman*] — special edition of the *BOA VONTADE* magazine —, page 11: "(...) The Woman's role is essential for the survival of the peoples. Sister, wife, mother, friend, worker, head of the family, she is an indispensable presence and loving counselor. For the children is her future, since she prepares future men and women. That is why the societies that depreciate them, depreciate themselves. Woman with enlightened knowledge turns the family bond strong as well as a community big, moral, respected and united."

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Statement submitted by United States Committee for UNIFEM, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* * *

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-22506 (E) 090206

Statement

The United States Committee for UNIFEM (UNIFEM USA) supports the innovative and catalytic programs of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which have particular relevance to the two areas of discussion for the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW):

- Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work.
- Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.

Pursuing its mandate to ensure the involvement of women in mainstream development activities, particularly at the pre-investment stage, UNIFEM has been a leading force promoting women's economic rights and economic security as a means to reducing women's poverty and exclusion. UNIFEM's activities have focused on guaranteeing women and girls rights to land and inheritance and on increasing access to decent employment, resources, markets, training, and information technology.

UNIFEM's recent publication, *Progress of the World's Women 2005* gives evidence on how decent work is basic to achieving economic security. The report documents that worldwide women are concentrated in poorly paid, unsafe and insecure jobs, with the informal sector requiring special attention. This study provides models of what can and should be done to help the working poor, especially women, minimize the costs and maximize the benefits of their work. It also suggests the necessity of advocacy to stop the generation of informal, insecure and badly paid employment by expanding formal employment opportunities as well as taking action to increase social protection and representative voice for the working poor, especially women.

Additionally, one of UNIFEM's strategic focus areas, ending violence against women, concentrates on the "enhanced participation of women in development" through education and health initiatives. Since its start in 1997, the UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, which funds innovative projects primarily at the national and local levels, has awarded $10 million in grants to 178 initiatives in 100 countries to educate women and enhance their capacities to combat violence.

Another strategic focus area of UNIFEM is reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls. Gender-based violence is also one of the leading factors in HIV infection. UNIFEM has enlisted with a broad range of partners from governments and parliamentarians to faith-based groups and local villages to develop public awareness and prevention for HIV/AIDS.

The Trust Fund has contributed significantly to identifying forward-looking strategies to promote gender equality and the advancement of women and girls. However, at present, the Fund can only support one of every 15 grant applications, leaving hundreds of worthy projects unfunded each year. UNIFEM USA urges Member States and private donors to increase support to the Trust Fund to strengthen its potential as a strong mechanism for global action for women's human rights.

UNIFEM USA has supported UNIFEM's activities to combat violence against women both by organizing annual Spring Walks where the donations of participating organizations are earmarked for the Trust Fund and by encouraging its chapters to hold annual events which raise awareness and resources for UNIFEM's anti-violence efforts.

UNIFEM's efforts surrounding its strategic goal that focuses on achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war, address the second theme of this year's CSW, i.e. "the equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels". UNIFEM's programs have been especially effective in promoting women's leadership in peace negotiations and post-conflict situations in Africa and Asia. In Afghanistan and Iraq, where new constitutions and new governing bodies have been created, UNIFEM has provided training on women's rights to government officials and NGOs to ensure strong women's participation.

With the goal of achieving gender equality throughout the world, UNIFEM/USA strongly supports UNIFEM's work to strengthen and expand the compliance of Member States with treaty obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its efforts to promote universal ratification and the removal of reservations to CEDAW.

UNIFEM/USA calls attention to this year as the Thirtieth Anniversary of UNIFEM and again urges member states to provide sufficient financial resources for this important UN agency to continue and expand its important work in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

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Statement submitted by Dominican Leadership Conference, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and UNANIMA International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-22552 (E) 060206

Statement

We are NGOs who have committed ourselves and our resources to speak and act with others towards global justice for those made poor especially women and the girl child. The persons with whom we live and work and the stories we hear daily speak of the survival struggle of women who are migrant workers; asylum seekers and refugees; indigenous women; women affected by HIV/AIDS and conflict situations; women who have no employment formal or informal; female heads of households; women who have no access to credit or water to drink or to use in their fields. We see daily the increased feminization of poverty even when these same women are contributing partners in the economy. They are the working poor.

> From India: Mrs. Guddi 37-year old woman a polio patient is a daily wage laborer with two daughters and a young son. Her elder daughter is mute. Having no husband she has to fend for her family. Guddi is a member of 'AZAD' (Free) Women's Self Help Group formed in January 2003. The members collect Rs. 20/- per month as saving. Since then she has availed herself of loans 11 times from her group.

> From Zimbabwe: My husband is a domestic worker so he does not earn a lot. We have a free room, light and water and sometimes food from the house. I was a Career Nurse but am now retired. Since I retired I started selling vegetables, pop-corn and other items of demand which people looked for on their way to work or on their way home and shops were too far away. I helped to educate my children this way and later I supplemented my husband's earnings so we could live better.

We applaud the request that the Secretary-General's next study be "Women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources, including microfinance." [1]

The multiplier effect of investing in women's development has been well documented by the UN and other field agencies. So too have been the negative results when women are left out. When girls and women have access to a quality education, good health care and decent work, their societies reap both social and economic resources. We believe that a quality education is of primary importance. When a woman is educated she will seek health care for herself and her family. And, with that education she can find decent work through which she can contribute to her society.

> To educate a girl is to educate a whole family. .....Study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, lower infant and maternal mortality, improve nutrition and promote health – including helping to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation. [2]

Undeniable as well are the adverse effects when women do not have access to education.

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[1] Resolution A/C.2/60/L.64 Women in Development, 9 December 2005.

[2] Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General. UNICEF State of the World's Children 2004. Girl's Education and Development.

> What can I do now – life is so hard. There are no jobs and we are not allowed to be self-employed. I really do not know what exactly did we do to de erve this? It has become as a rule not to survive, yet it becomes compulsory to say we are 'iving peacefully. I have to pay the new term's school fees. Surely they will not go to schoo And, how will I tell them this. They are doing well. For a mother it is breaking my heart to en think of the future. My children and I are struggling and we are really desperate - wher will help come for us? I get sick with worry.

Additionally, we need to emphasize women's economic empowerment. We strongly agree "that empowering people, particularly women, to strengthen their own capacities is a main objective of development and its principal resource. Empowerment requires the full participation of people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions determining the functioning and well-being of our societies."[3] Gender budgeting and auditing are essential. And, we are pleased that a strong link between poverty eradication and gender equality is recognized in many UN resolutions. Blatant inequality is highlighted in all of the "equality studies" this year: the 2005 Human Development Report (UNDP), World Development Report 2006 (World Bank), Predicament of Inequality: Report on the World Social Situation 2005 (UNDESA), and World Economic and Social Survey 2005 (UNDESA). They argue strongly the need for equal access to systems especially education, health, and work. "Gender dimensions are deeply embedded in observed inequalities."[4]

For that reason we need to work on the structural underpinnings of our economic systems. Many of us have been involved in the process of Financing for Development since the earliest Preparation Commissions for Monterrey and continue this work with the new NGO Committee on Financing for Development. Women's development issues surrounding trade are myriad. We read, "The global wealth of nations has multiplied sevenfold in the past 50 years and international trade has grown even more dramatically; yet poverty among women has only increased."[5] At the recent Hong Kong WTO meeting many of our NGOs emphasized women's human rights and participation in the trading system especially in decision-making.

> Rights are associated with property holders and WTO agreements place land in the hands of wealthy men and the transnational corporations.
> This has contributed to the erosion of women's rights, notably women's right to self-sufficiency and self-determination.[6]

Indigenous women have highlighted the importance of intellectual property rights:

> "We recall that Indigenous Peoples extensive knowledge of the plants and animals on our lands, has historically been developed, shared and used collectively, and has been systematically robbed most recently via

[3] World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development - Part II.
[4] The Inequality Predicament Report on the World Social Situation 2005, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, A/60/117/Rev.1, ST/ESA/299.
[5] INSTRAW study Conclusion - Beijing at 10 – Women and Poverty.
[6] Beijing+10 Meets WTO+10: Women's Rights Activists Take Aim at the WTO By Nadia Johnson, USGTN & Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) December 15, 2005, Hong Kong.

> international trade rules like the World Trade Organization's TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights), which fail to recognize collective intellectual property rights and facilitate the piracy of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge by individuals and corporations."[7]

And so with the Roman Catholic Bishops of the United States. and Latin America we urge that trade agreements be ones: "that stimulate economic growth while at the same time giving priority to integral human development that builds solidarity, improves the common good of all, and in an essential way reduces poverty, exclusion and hunger."[8] *Freedom of trade is fair only when it is in accord with the demands of justice.*[9]

Recommendations:

1. Use a quota system to assure that women are involved in national parliaments/ legislatures as well as local decision-making bodies.
2. Provide space for consultation with Women's critical analysis at every level for new ways to promote development.
3. Assure that the decisions made to take advantage of trade as an engine of growth are pro-women.
4. Assure that Trade rules protect the intellectual property rights of indigenous peoples.
5. Use Gandhi's axiom: Ask if your decisions will help the poorest.
6. Enable national governments to provide for the social obligations to their citizens and do not force privatization of public goods which affect women and children.
7. Provide the political commitment and adequate resources for all national and UN programs that empower women.
8. Exhort all governments that have not done so to sign on to CEDAW and its optional protocol assuring that women have equal rights in every aspect of their lives.
9. Use as a Resource Women, Development, and the UN by Devaki Jain to understand the 60 year history with insights for the path forward.

The above statement is endorsed and supported by the following non-governmetnal organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Action aides aux familles démunies, Baha'i International Community, Congregations of St. Joseph, Grail, International Council of Women, International Federation for Home Economics, Loretto Community and School Sisters of Notre Dame.

[7] International Indigenous Women's Forum Declaration, New York, 27 of February, 2005.
[8] Joint Communiqué of Catholic Bishops participating in the "Ecumenical Meeting on Integration in the Americas", September 8, 2005.
[9] Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church 2005, 366 Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, USCCB Publishing, Washington, D.C.

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Statement submitted by Action Canada for Population and Development, Advocates for Youth, Alan Guttmacher Institute, Australian Reproductive Health Alliance, Catholics for a Free Choice, Center for Reproductive Rights, Center for Women's Global Leadership, CHANGE, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, Family Care International, Girls' Power Initiative, Human Rights Watch, Interact Worldwide, International Planned Parenthood Federation (Western Hemisphere Region), IPAS, Italian Association for Women in Development, Marie Stopes International, New Zealand Family Planning Association, Population Action International, Womankind Worldwide, Women's Environment and Development Organization, Women for Women's Human Rights — New Ways and World Population Foundation, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-22570 (E) 070206

Statement

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will review the thematic issue of "Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work", at its 50th session from 27 February to 10 March 2006. In that context, we would especially like to highlight the need to ensure the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and rights of all women affected by HIV/AIDS as an essential contribution to enabling women around the world to achieve gender equality and development for themselves and their families. These women include (but are not restricted to) adults and adolescents who have been infected with HIV and women who engage in sex work as a means of ensuring their own and their families' survival.

Until very recently, the majority of HIV programs related to women and AIDS focused on preventing perinatal transmission (PPT) of HIV, rather than on women's universal needs for basic SRH services. While efforts to reduce risks of perinatal transmission must certainly continue, we should acknowledge that most PPT programs have considered women mainly as vectors of disease. Insufficient attention has been given to expanding access to effective voluntary HIV counseling and testing for all women, whether they are pregnant or not. Greater attention must be given to the development and distribution of affordable technologies that can prevent HIV infection, particularly in women. SRH and HIV programs must both address the links between HIV/STI infection and unintended pregnancy as outcomes of unprotected and non-consensual sex.

To more effectively combat the effects of the AIDS epidemic, SRH and HIV/AIDS programs should provide unbiased and respectful diagnostic and treatment services that will ensure HIV-positive women's wellbeing, whether they are pregnant or not. Antiretroviral therapy programs must be gender-sensitive, ensuring that women and men have equal access to steady drug supplies; women's access must not be inhibited because drugs are only available through PPT programs or because attendant costs (for example, for CD4 counts and viral load tests) are unaffordable.

High numbers of women and girls suffer sexual assault, both within and outside marriage and in the context of sex work. Such rapes put them at risk of both HIV/STI infection and unwanted pregnancies. Much greater efforts are needed to expand access to post-exposure prophylaxis for rape survivors, as well as STI diagnosis and treatment and availability of emergency contraception for female survivors of assault.

The development of policy statements and service guidelines on sexual and reproductive health should include representatives of HIV-positive women's networks, including younger women, so as to benefit from their personal insights and experiences. SRH and HIV policy statements and service guidelines should at the least include the following elements:

- An emphasis on the human rights of women living with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS. This includes freedom from discrimination in the provision of health services and recognition that coercion or pressure on HIV-positive women to undergo sterilization or terminate pregnancies is a clear violation of their rights.
- An emphasis on giving adolescent and adult women, including those who are HIV-positive and/or sex workers, nonjudgmental information and services tailored to their needs and in a manner which is easily accessible to them.
- A range of high-quality services including: comprehensive contraceptive services geared at both preventing HIV/STI transmission and avoiding unintended pregnancy; antenatal, perinatal and postnatal care, when requested, both for woman and baby; postabortion care and measures to ensure women's access to safe, legal abortions when requested; antiretroviral therapy and drugs to treat opportunistic infections; and diagnosis and treatment of reproductive tract infections.
- Employment of women living with HIV in prevention and voluntary HIV counseling and testing programs as paid staff rather than as unpaid volunteers.

In addition, governmental bodies, NGOs and universities must promote capacity-building and skills-building for women affected by and living with HIV/AIDS so that they can participate meaningfully in advocacy and policymaking. These measures will help us achieve the promised development envisioned in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals on empowering women and advancing gender equity, reducing maternal mortality, and combating HIV/AIDS.

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Statement submitted by International Women's Health Coalition, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-22582 (E) 070206

Statement

The continued expansion of the HIV/AIDS pandemic reveals our failure to change the conditions that make all women and girls vulnerable to this disease. Every day 7000 women and girls become infected. They will require comprehensive information, treatment and care, including reproductive health care. Information and services are also needed by the majority of women who are not infected if they are to realize their right to remain so.

At this year's review of the progress toward implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (May 31 to June 2, 2006) the international community will review the successes and shortcomings of the past five years, and recommend action needed to reverse the pandemic.

We hope this session of the Commission on the Status of Women will send a strong message to the international community as they prepare for the HIV/AIDS review. Namely, that meeting the needs of girls and women must be at the center of a multi-sectoral response to the global pandemic, and will require their equal participation in decision-making. Both the Beijing Platform for Action and the ICPD Programme of Action serve as essential frameworks for action and include commitments to achieve these goals.

Sexual and reproductive rights are a pivotal neglected priority in HIV/AIDS policy, programming, and resource allocation. Failure to protect girls' and women's rights including their right to health and their right to live free of sexual coercion and violence fuels the pandemic. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and education, and protection of sexual and reproductive rights, are essential to ending it.

It is widely acknowledged that rates of HIV infection are increasing in women of every region in the world and that these rates are often higher for girls and women than for men. Women, especially young women and girls, are vulnerable because of denial and neglect of their rights, gender inequality, social, cultural and economic factors, pervasive violence, and biology.

Girls' and women's empowerment must be at the centre of a multi-sectoral response to the global pandemic. Regarding sexual and reproductive rights and health in particular, we call on HIV/AIDS decision makers at all levels to:

1. **Redefine "High Risk"**. Recognize that women, especially young women and girls, are at serious risk, and that all women have the right to have access to confidential VCT, treatment, care and support as part of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.
2. **Expand Decision-making**. Ensure that women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, and women's health and rights advocates, are full participants in decision making, especially at the highest levels, so that decisions reflect the realities and needs of women.
3. **Exercise Leadership**. Prioritize in words and concrete actions reducing the risk and the burden of HIV/AIDS for women and girls, through protection of their sexual and reproductive rights and health, including the promotion of policies and laws against discrimination and sexual violence.
4. **Invest HIV targeted funds**. Allocate and monitor the use of significant HIV/AIDS resources for health services and education that protect and empower women and girls, including:

- Comprehensive **sexual and reproductive health services** accessible to all women with capacity to deliver HIV/AIDS and other STI prevention, counseling, testing, care, and treatment (or referral) services.
- Universal access to **subsidized female condoms** as well as male condoms, and development and dissemination of **microbicides** and other women-initiated, prevention technologies.
- **Comprehensive sexuality education** that promotes sexual and reproductive rights, gender equality and skills development, as well as full and accurate information, for all children and youth in and out of school.

5. **Strengthen HIV/AIDS programs**: Protect all women's health and rights through HIV/AIDS programs:

- Ensure women's access to confidential, VCT, including support for the choice not to be tested; provide protection from violence, stigma, and discrimination that may result from disclosure of status;
- Ensure equitable, sustained access to treatment for AIDS and opportunistic infections for all women and girls, appropriate to their age, health and nutritional status, with full protection of their human rights including their sexual and reproductive rights; increase research on and development of appropriate treatment for various ages; and track access to treatment by age, sex, and continuity of care;
- Increase and utilize funds earmarked for care and support to reduce women's disproportionate burden of care;

The 2006 review of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS is a key opportunity for the international community to incorporate this action agenda for women and girls as we work to achieve the goal of universal access to prevention, treatment and care.

This statement is supported by the following non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council:[1] Center for Global Women's Leadership, Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era, Federation for Women and Family Planning, Girls' Power Initiative, Network Women in Development Europe, Swedish Association for Sexuality Education and Women for Women's Human Rights — New Ways.

[1] The statement is also endorsed by the following organizations: African Women's Development Fund, Choice for Youth and Sexuality, Foundation for Studies and Research on Women, Gestos, International Community of Women Living with AIDS, JOICP, Latin America and the Caribbean Women's Health Network, Mujer y Salud en Uruguay, Rutgers Nisso Groep and Thai Women and HIV/AIDS Task Force.

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Statement submitted by International Islamic Committee for Woman and Child, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-22545 (E) 070206

Statement

Most UN data and conventions, including the Beijing document, reflect legal and justifiable concern for the status of women worldwide, and attempt to make changes for the better. Thanks to this international concern, the status of women has improved in the areas of illiteracy, political participation, and some health services that are provided to women in many societies. However, we are still far from achieving our goal, as humanity continues to suffer from many problems, including the following:

- The suffering of women and children as a result of armed disputes and occupation
- The rise in family deterioration which is demonstrated by increasing divorce rates, and the replacement of marriage by other types of relationships that result in illegitimate and abandoned children who have no one to care for them and thus become delinquent, and in some cases are used in drug trafficking and prostitution
- The exploitation of women's bodies for publicity purposes and in the media
- The deterioration of values and ethics which has led to sexual relations outside of marriage, as well as homosexuality (which in some cases begins during adolescence). These practices result in sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, and lead to problems related to teen pregnancy such as dropping out of school and illegal abortions.

As our religion and culture are based on the principles of equality between the sexes, and refusal to accept all forms of injustice regardless of the cause, the Coalition of Islamic Organizations (CIO) believes that it is one of its obligations to support such efforts. More than 1400 years ago, Islam established principles that succeeded in accomplishing the following:

- The establishment of equality between the sexes in general human rights and responsibilities, and affirmation of women's full legal competence and financial independence.
- The belief that education is an obligatory right for women just as it is for men, while emphasizing women's rights to family and social care, her right to participate in all aspects of general life, her right to employment. Islam rejects all forms of injustice between the sexes and does not establish rights on the basis of one's femininity or masculinity, except for those rulings that are based on the differences between men and women with regard to their natural duties.
- Islam emphasizes that each sex has characteristics that set it apart from the other, without implying that one is ultimately superior to the other. It is for this reason that the Qur'an has forbidden the practice of preferring sons to daughters.
- Islam opposes all injustices against women such as female infanticide, which is practiced in some societies by way of prenatal sex selection to abort female fetuses, forced marriages, and depriving women of their inheritance. All forms of aggression against women are unconditionally prohibited.

The CIO believes that the document interpretation and application should comply with the following principles:

- Respect for the religious and cultural variability and the specific identity of every people; for just as problems differ according to cultures and societies, so do their solutions.
- Equality must be based on the principles of justice and fairness, and should not assume identicalness in all aspects.
- Root solutions should be developed to deal with problems comprehensively so as to avoid the causes of problems before they begin. Solutions should not merely address the effects of problems like teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS. Islam solves these problems by emphasizing a "culture of chastity" and prohibiting sexual relationships outside of marriage.
- Men and women should be treated within the frame of their social roles in order to maintain familial and societal interests, and avoid individualistic attitudes.

This statement has been adopted by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council:[1] Africa Muslims Agency, Charitable Society for Social Welfare, Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria, Human Appeal International, International Islamic Charitable Organization, International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, International Islamic Relief Organization, International Muslim's Women's Union, Islamic Relief, Muslim World League, Qatar Charitable Society and Scouts musulmans algériens.

[1] Also endorsed by the following organization: Coalition of Islamic Organizations and Soul.

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Statement submitted by Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, UNANIMA International and VIVAT International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-22519 (E) 080206

Statement

We, international NGOs committed through direct service and advocacy to the human rights and empowerment of women and girls, welcome this opportunity to submit a statement on enhanced participation, ensuring an enabling environment and equal participation of women. These themes are crucial to the development of a world of human dignity and security.

We state unequivocally and with utmost urgency that the current global situation is characterized by a disabling environment in which women cannot fully participate and in which gender equality is an unattainable dream. The global environment is one in which women, because of their gender, are the objects of multiple forms of public and private violence in all cultures, in all societies. Until and unless this gender paradigm by which women are real and potential objects of male aggression changes we cannot hope to realize the advancement of women in social, political or economic life.

We applaud the current process of the preparation of the Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Women. We look forward to seeing groundbreaking analysis in the Study. We urge the Study to clearly name and address ancient and socially embedded forms of violence such as the prostitution of women. We hope that the Study will clarify that the source of Violence Against Women stems from the current social constructs of gender, by which men are the main perpetrators of violence against women. We are hopeful that this study will take our international community beyond previous rhetoric into practical and real social changes that will both eliminate Violence against Women and permanently change the structures that perpetuate Violence against Women.

We remind this Commission that Violence Against Women is so prevalent, persistent and widespread across cultures that it goes unquestioned by members of society, both victims and perpetrators. We note that the cultural acceptance of Violence Against Women invests instruments of mass media, language development, and popular entertainment such as music and pornographic images, with the power to legitimate oppressive patriarchal systems. Furthermore, many men and women remain silent – neither standing up nor speaking out against gender violence. All in society become desensitized to these patterns. We note with particular concern the increasing sexualized images of women and girls that turn them into objects of consumer product promotion. Systems that sexualize and market women and girls for consumer consumption can never promote the kinds of enabling environments and equality that this Commission seeks to support.

We have seen, where military structures dominate, the acceptance of Violence Against Women becomes ever more deeply embedded. This is evident in the rampant rate of uninhibited rape during war, the use of girl-soldiers, the growing trafficking of women for prostitution, and the deepening plight of rural women more and more dependent on male members of families. Such dependency is particularly visible in the current economic systems that disadvantage women. Consequently, the inferiority of women becomes entrenched in the very structures of law, official policy, language, and religious and cultural beliefs. Violence against Women is not only accepted but it is normalized.

As we consider this environment of Violence Against Women, we recall the words of Secretary General Kofi Annan:

> *"Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation. And it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture, or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development, and peace."*[1]

And we recall the words of an NGO speaker at the NGO hearings of June 2005 in preparation for the Millenium+5 Summit, General Assembly of September 2005:

> "We, the women and girls of the world, fear war and all the violence that warlike acts bring against us: rape; sexual violence; displacement; death; hunger; abusive power used to humiliate the mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters of the defeated; sexual abuses and the prostitution that belligerent forces, regular troops, and even peace units impose on women…

1 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, 1999

We, the women and girls of the world, fear gender discrimination, a discrimination that kills thousands of girls before being born, and which condemns those who are born to lack of opportunities, violence, exploitation, malnutrition, marginalization, inequality, and traditional practices harmful to their bodies and their human dignity…

We, the women and girls in developing countries, fear poverty - …the feminization of poverty is rising and threatens the world.

We, the women and girls of the world, fear gender violence, a violence that is exercised just as much in the public sphere as in the private sphere and continues unabated. Women and girls continue suffering violence routinely in their homes, where they should be guaranteed the right to life, integrity, and personal security.
We also fear gender equality politics among the member States and multilateral organizations when their practices do not reflect the commitments of the Millennium Declaration or the Report of the Secretary General, "In Larger Freedom." We fear the discrepancy between political words and actions, especially when the organizations that protect and promote the rights of women and girls have faced minimum resources, infrastructure and funds.

We fear any law or political agenda that legitimizes prostitution as work, and therefore facilitates the expansion of sexual exploitation as a business, putting women and girls in great danger. This is not simply about the phenomenon of migration or tourism, it is a way of perpetuating stereotypes and traditions in which the bodies of women and girls, available for the sexual pleasure of men, are considered to be consumer goods that can be bought, sold, or rented.[2]"

Concerned with the urgency of these issues, we call on this Commission to:

- Fully support the current Study of the Secretary General.
- Speak on behalf of additional resources, beyond the Study, to gather more refined data and statistics on the prevalence and extent and reality of all forms of violence against women, including prostitution.
- Organize, within the Commission's aegis, within all societal sectors throughout the international community, ongoing opportunities for discussion, analysis and solution promotion on the issue of Violence Against Women.

Aware of all government promises to eliminate Violence Against Women we call on Governments to:

1. Make clear, specific and local recommendations not only about ending particular forms of violence but on transforming systemic social structures such as patriarchy and economic systems that unremittingly disadvantage women.

2. Adopt and actively enforce anti-trafficking legislation. Use the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others and the recent UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children for the foundations of national and regional legislation.

2 The Informal Interactive Hearings Of The General Assembly With Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations And The Private Sector, UN, June 23, 24 2005. Ms. Teresa Columba ULLOA, Speaker for the Hearing on Freedom From FEAR Cluster.

3. Sign and enforce the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

4. Include in States-parties' mandated reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, relative to article 6 of the Convention, an evaluation of the legal status of the prostitution of women, including efforts to prosecute perpetrators, decriminalize women in prostitution, and penalize the demand.

5. Articulate a coherent national policy that explicitly denounces all violence, including the prostitution of women, as a violation of the human rights of women.

6. Review and amend laws that structurally support inferiority of women (e.g., dowry laws, marriage laws, property laws, etc.)

7. Establish preventive policies and protocols that address the root causes of Violence Against Women, including political and economic structures, systems of male dominance, and social tolerance for violence against women.

8. Address the issue of global armed conflict and militarization and ensure the protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

and,

9. Support public service campaigns on national levels that will promulgate clear messages that oppose violence against women and that articulate support for gender equality in all spheres of life.

We in the NGO community will continue to support and work enthusiastically in partnership with all such initiatives by States Parties.

This statement is endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council:

Congregations of St. Joseph
Catholic International Education Office
Gray Panthers
International Federation of Business and Professional Women
International Federation of University Women
International Federation of Women in Legal Careers
International Federation of Women Lawyers
International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation
Mouvement pour l'abolition de la prostitution et de la pornographie et de toutes formes de violence sexuelles et discrimination sexistes
National Council of Women
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries
Soroptimist International
World ORT Union